

SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

Voyage: Spring 2014
Discipline: English Writing
ENWR 2600: Fiction Writing
Division: Lower
Faculty Name: Natalie Bakopoulos

Pre-requisites: An introductory creative writing course. A basic knowledge of the elements of short fiction and a love of reading and writing.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An intermediate-level short fiction writing, workshopping, and discussion course. The primary focus of the class will be on short stories, and in our writing we will emphasize both the drafting process and revision, where the real writing begins. We will examine the various choices and craft elements (plot, character, dialogue, point of view etc) that both published writers and you, our student writers, use to achieve their/your goals.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To produce two short pieces of fiction
2. To gain insight into the writers who have and are influencing the genre
3. To hone skills at critical self-assessment and reflection on the process of writing.
4. To hone skills of criticism and reflection on the work of your peers.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

The Scribner Anthology of Contemporary Fiction, Edited by Lex Wilford and Michael Martone, Touchstone Books, ISBN 9781416532279

Writing Fiction, by Janet Burroway, Elizabeth Stuckey-French, and Ned Stuckey-French, 8th Edition, ISBN 978-0205750344

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

A1- January 12: Introduction to the Short Story

A2- January 14:
"How to Read Like a Writer"

A3- January 16:
"Aurora" by Junot Diaz and "Night Women" by Edwidge Danticat

“The Deep Eye” by Michael Byers
Please write a short, 1-2 page (single spaced) response to both stories, considering Byers’
essay on the first person.

January 17: Hilo

A4- January 19

“Once in a Lifetime” by Jhumpa Lahiri

A5- January 22:

“We Didn’t” by Stuart Dybek

A6- January 25:

Readings to be determined

A7- January 27

Readings to be determined

January 29-February 3: Yokohama, Transit, Kobe

A8- February 4:

Readings to be determined

February 6-11: Shanghai, Transit, Hong Kong

February 11, Hong Kong: The epistolary story and the invoked listener

In Hong Kong, we will be exploring writing fiction that invokes a listener: stories that resemble an intimate letter with both an implied and addressed audience. We will work on crafting a short piece that does two things: (1) uses a narrative of a daylong trip to drive the present action of a story and (2) imbue the story with past experiences that somehow relate to the travel narrative and the person being addressed. The field lab will include a conversation with an author from the City University of Hong Kong, lunch, and a trip to Victoria Peak, which will provide a panoramic view of the city and also a structural destination (or peak, or climax), for the narratives we will write.

A9- February 12:

Field lab assignment due, Hong Kong, draft 1

February 14-19: Ho Chi Minh City

A10- February 20: Small group workshop of field lab story (groups of three)

February 22-23: Singapore

A11- February 4

Stories due for workshop 1

- 1.
- 2.

February 27 to March 4: Rangoon

A12- March 5:

Student Workshop 1

Stories due

- 3.
- 4.

A13- March 7:

Student Workshop 2

Stories due

- 5.
- 6.

March 9-14: Cochin

A14- March 15

Student Workshop 3

Stories due

- 7.
- 8.

A15- March 18:

Student Workshop 4

Stories due

- 9.
- 10.

March 21: Port Louis

A16- March 20:

Student Workshop 5

Stories due

11.

12.

A17- March 23:

Student Workshop 6

Stories due

13.

14.

A18- March 26

Student Workshop 7

15.

16.

March 28-April 2: Cape Town

A19- April 3:

Student Workshop 8

17.

18.

A20- April 5:

Student Workshop 9

A21- April 8: Strategies for Revision

Tom Jenks, "A Brief Handbook of Revision for Writers"

April 10-14: Tema and Takoradi

A22- April 19: In-class revision

A23- April 22: LAST DAY OF CLASS

Portfolios due

Reading Performance: Greatest Hits

April 23-27: Casablanca

May 2: Arrive in Southampton

FIELD WORK

FIELD LAB (*At least 20 percent of the contact hours for each course, to be led by the instructor.*)

FIELD ASSIGNMENTS

Unlike the two short stories that you will produce for this class, you will compose your Field Experience responses as informal character sketches from three of the locations we visit.

- (1) You will be required to write a brief response for each Field Experience.
- (2) Each response will be minimum one page, single-spaced.
- (3) Each response will be in the form of an overheard conversation or interaction:
“Overheard in...” Or “Witnessed in...”

METHODS OF EVALUATION / GRADING RUBRIC

Grades

Grade Breakdown

You will only be graded on revised polished work. Short exercises and responses will be pass/fail. Writing is a process, and while there is no “right answer” for any piece of writing, there certainly is not a right answer for fiction and drama. I’m more concerned that you’re incorporating the craft elements we’ll study over the course: character, dialogue, theme, plot, setting, image, voice, etc. A messy revision that has not considered such things as clarity of space and time for instance, or precise, fresh language, will not receive a high grade, nor will other types of sloppy execution. I’d rather see you attempt a radical revision that doesn’t quite work yet than change a few words around in a piece and call it done, of course, but it has to be solid.

Revised fiction portfolio (consisting of revised workshopped story, field lab assignment, and reflection on revision)	40%
Participation in field lab and completed draft of assignment	20%
Written critiques, craft responses, and exercises	20%
Participation	20%

The Workshop

We need you here. Because this class is a writing workshop and not simply a literature class, we will spend much of our time discussing each other’s writing. A workshop relies as much on the critics as it does on the writers. You will be expected to come to class having carefully read the creative efforts of your peers and be prepared not only to participate actively in the discussion, but to have thoughtfully and thoroughly critiqued the plays or stories. This consists not only of making notes and edits in the margins, but also writing a

one-page, typed critique. We will talk more about things to think about when critiquing the work of your peers before the first workshop.

A Note on the Work

Creative, imaginative writing is art, and art can be provocative. It should make us think, reconsider our ideas about the world; it should make us laugh or cry or feel as though we've been punched in the gut. Careful you don't take "provocative" to mean simply to shock: good, provocative art will incite an emotional and intellectual response in the reader, not simply revulsion or disgust. Dark or taboo subjects are often what writers and artists like to and should explore, and I want you to feel you can take risks in your writing. We will certainly read some stories and plays in this class that might put you on edge or make you uncomfortable. But reliance on excessive gore, violence, hate speech, or pornography simply to get a reader's attention is not edgy or avant-garde; it is boring. And artistically lazy, anti-intellectual, offensive, and will not be accepted in this class, nor will work that is perceived as a direct or indirect threat to others in the university community.

HONOR CODE

Semester at Sea students enroll in an academic program administered by the University of Virginia, and thus bind themselves to the University's honor code. The code prohibits all acts of lying, cheating, and stealing. Please consult the Voyager's Handbook for further explanation of what constitutes an honor offense.

Each written assignment for this course must be pledged by the student as follows: "On my honor as a student, I pledge that I have neither given nor received aid on this assignment." The pledge must be signed, or, in the case of an electronic file, signed "[signed]."